

LETTERS

ON

BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.

BY DEFENSOR.

"FOR this cause Christ ordained Baptism in water, that as sure as we see, feel, and touch water with our bodies, and be washed with water ; so assuredly ought we to believe, when we be baptized, that Christ is verily present with us, and that by him we be newly born again spiritually, and washed from our sins, and grafted into the stock of Christ's own body, and be apparelled, clothed, and harnessed with him in such wise, that as the devil hath no power against Christ, so hath he none against us, so long as we remain grafted in that stock, and be clothed with that apparel, and harnessed with that armor." — *Archbishop Cranmer, Works, II. 302.*

NEW YORK:
STANFORD & SWORDS,
137 BROADWAY.
1852.

CONTENTS.

	Page.
LETTER I. Baptismal Regeneration taught by the Protestant Episcopal Church,	3
II. Baptismal Regeneration taught by the Primitive Church, .	6
III. Statements of the Westminster Divines,	10
IV. Justin Martyr a Competent Witness,	12
V. Opinions of Justin not to be confounded with his testimony,	16
VI. Value of Justin Martyr's Testimony,	21
VII. The Church of the Second Century uncorrupt,	25
VIII. The Word of God teaches Baptismal Regeneration,	28
IX. The Word of God teaches Baptismal Regeneration,	33
X. Common Objection to the Doctrine,	39
XI. Alleged Evils of the Doctrine,	42
XII. Alleged Evils of the Doctrine,	45

LETTERS

ON

BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.

LETTER I.

BAPTISMAL REGENERATION TAUGHT BY THE PROTESTANT
EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

——— *Rectory, January 30, 185—.*

MY DEAR SIR :—

When unhappily for his own comfort and peace, a clergyman finds himself differing in doctrinal opinion from a parishioner so deeply interested in theological controversy as yourself, he cannot but desire to justify his position, and, if possible, to convert a disbeliever and opposer into a friend and advocate, BY APPEALING TO OUR APPROVED STANDARDS, TO THE TESTIMONY OF THE EARLY CHURCH, AND TO THE INSPIRED SCRIPTURES THEMSELVES.

But how shall this attempt be made? Historical and minute details are little suited to the pulpit, and private explanations may be desultory and exciting; so that the only course remaining for me is to address you by letter. This then is my apology for troubling you with this communication, and for venturing to trespass upon your valuable time.

In our conversation last evening, you remarked, that BAPTISMAL REGENERATION IS TAUGHT BY THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH. In this conclusion you are certainly very correct; for in HER AUTHORIZED STANDARDS, AND BY HER MOST RESPECTED DIVINES, this Church, both in England and her dependencies, and in this country, has spoken on this subject with no uncertain voice.

You are familiar with the decided language of the Church in her *Office for the Baptism of Infants*, where she thus expresses her

judgment concerning every baptized infant, "Seeing now, that this child *is regenerate*, and grafted into the body of Christ's Church, let us give thanks unto Almighty God for these benefits: We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee *to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit*, to receive him for thine own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into thy holy Church."

In the *Homilies*, which as you know, our XXXV. Article of Religion recognizes as standards of doctrine, you will find these declarations respecting the effects of baptism: "The sacrifice of the Son of God upon the cross obtains remission, *as well of our original sin in baptism*, as of all actual sin committed by us after our baptism;"¹ "*Washed in baptism from the filthiness of sin*;"² "Not to pass the time of this present life unfruitfully and idly, *after that we are baptized or justified*."³

You are also aware that in the compilation of our Book of Common Prayer, Archbishop Cranmer and Bishops Latimer and Ridley were the principal agents, martyred witnesses for the truth, who in their discourses confirm the doctrines embodied in our Prayer Book and Homilies, and thus more fully show what were the doctrinal views of the English Reformers. In a sermon published by Cranmer in 1548, after declaring the second birth to be "spiritual, whereby our inward man and mind is renewed by the Holy Ghost, so that our hearts and minds receive new desires, which they had not of their first birth," he affirms that this "*second birth is by the water of baptism*, which Paul calleth the bath of regeneration, because *our sins be forgiven us in baptism*, and the Holy Ghost is poured into us as into God's beloved children, so that by the power and working of the Holy Ghost we be born again spiritually, and made new creatures; and so by baptism we enter the kingdom of God, and shall be saved forever, if we continue to our lives' end in the faith of Christ."

In one of Latimer's sermons is this assertion: "*We wash out remission of our sins by baptism*;" while Ridley in his work against Transubstantiation, declares, that "*in baptism the soul is cleansed from all filth by the Holy Ghost*."

Bishop Hooper lived at the same time with the authors of our doctrinal standards, whose opinions I have just quoted: his declarations are equally clear and positive; for in his Articles upon the Creed, he says, "Baptism is the entry of the Church, a washing into a new birth, and a renewing of the Holy Ghost. *By this baptism*

¹ Hom. of Salvation II. P.

² Hom. for Good Friday.

³ Hom. of Salvation, III. P.

we are changed and altered from children of wrath, of sin, of the devil, and of destruction, into the children of God, of grace, and of salvation."

These several extracts exhibit with sufficient plainness, surely, the teaching of the Protestant Episcopal Church on the subject of baptism three centuries since. Has this authorized teaching ever been changed? Not in the least; but through the preserving mercy of God remains just as it was when the compilers of our Liturgy sealed their testimony with their blood.

Of the distinguished part Bishop White bore in the organization of our American Church, I hardly need remind you, or of the deference which is so generally given to his opinions; and yet he not only held the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, but has explained and defended it very much at large in his Lectures on the Catechism, and in his Comparative View of the Calvinistic and Arminian Controversy. In his Lectures there occurs this remark: "One prominent property of the Catechism is its affirming that all persons, duly introduced into the Church of Christ by baptism — there being repentance and faith in adults, and a reasonable prospect of religious education in the case of infants — are made Christians in the true and proper sense of the terms; that they are not merely, as some say, members of the visible Church, but that *they are*, according to a familiar phrase of known meaning, *in a state of grace*."

I would also refer you to the opinion of the present Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. J. B. Summer, who, in his Apostolical Preaching, thus remarks: "Our Church considers baptism as conveying regeneration."

To our authorized standards I thus appeal, in justification of my own views, and to these founders and dignitaries of our Church, to show that in this matter I do not differ from my superiors, as well as to exhibit their understanding of this much debated subject. You seem surprised and grieved that I should adhere to the reviled and unpopular doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration; but at present this is my defence: *The Church, of which I am a Presbyter, teaches it*; and at my ordination I most solemnly promised to "give my faithful diligence, always so to minister the *doctrine and sacraments* of Christ, *as this Church hath received them*, so that I may teach the people committed to my cure and charge, with all diligence to keep and observe the same."

Yours, very truly and affectionately.

LETTER II.

BAPTISMAL REGENERATION TAUGHT BY THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH.

———— Rectory, January 31, 185—.

MY DEAR SIR:—

In my communication yesterday, I defended my adherence to the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, by appealing to the standards of our Church, and by citing the opinions of some of her most eminent divines. Another important question now presents itself: IS BAPTISMAL REGENERATION TAUGHT BY THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH? FOR SHE IS AN INFALLIBLE WITNESS TO THE INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE PREVALENT IN THE FIRST AGES OF THE GOSPEL.

For the fact that the Primitive Church held the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, I might easily multiply testimony; but as that of *Justin Martyr*, in the middle of the *second century*, when the doctrine of the *universal Church*, in whose behalf he writes, and therefore whose faith he exhibits, *could not* have been corrupted from the original Scriptural model, is amply sufficient, I will at present content myself with quoting what he says on this subject in his First Apology:—

“We will state in what manner *we are created anew by Christ*. As many as are persuaded and believe that the things which we teach and declare are true, and promise that they are determined to live accordingly, are taught to pray, and to beseech God with fasting, to grant them remission of their past sins, while we also pray and fast with them. We then lead them to a place where there is water, and there *they are regenerated* in the same manner as we also were; for they are then washed in that water in the name of God the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit; for Christ said, ‘Except ye be born again, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.’”¹

“The Apostles have also taught us for what reason *this new birth* is necessary: That we may no longer remain the children of necessity or of ignorance, but may become the children of choice and judgment, and may *obtain in the water remission of the sins which we have before committed*, the name of God the Father is pronounced over him who is *willing to be born again*, and hath repented of his sins; he who leads him to be *washed in the laver of baptism*, saying this” [the baptismal formula.] “*This washing is called illumination.*”²

¹ First Apology of Justin Martyr, Standard Works, vol. iv, p. 183, § 79.

² Ib. p. 184, § 80.

"This food is called by us the Eucharist; of which no one may partake unless he believes that what we teach is true, and *is washed in the laver, which is appointed for the forgiveness of sins and unto regeneration.*"¹

These words of Justin Martyr are of so much importance, that to them I wish to direct your special attention. In the year of our Lord 150, Justin, in a letter addressed to the reigning Roman emperors, defends his persecuted Christian brethren. He therefore speaks not merely for himself, but in the name and by the authority of the whole body of Christians at that early period. *The fact that his public letter in their behalf was permitted by them to descend to subsequent ages with their approval, stamps the document with the sanction of the entire Christian world as then existing.* Hence the testimony of Justin is the testimony of all his Christian brethren in the middle of the second century.

His testimony in the passages to which I have invited your special notice, relates to two classes of objects; the religious practices of his fellow-Christians, and the doctrines which they held. But observe; his mention of doctrines is entirely *incidental*, and therefore, as testimony the more valuable, because the more spontaneous and unconstrained. He is not, in this portion of his apology certainly, writing a treatise on Christian dogmatics, but simply stating what were the modes universally prevalent in his day, of administering the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and of conducting divine worship. He thus begins his "explanation:" "We will state also *in what manner* we are created anew by Christ," etc. (§ 79), and so throughout the whole description he proceeds in the form of narrative; consequently, all that he reveals to us concerning Christian doctrine, is *purely incidental*, and for this reason, the more important as evidence.

I will now ask the question, From what sources did Justin and his companions in tribulation, obtain their knowledge of Christian doctrine? Doubtless from the inspired Scriptures, and from the lips of living teachers. But who were the teachers of Christians in the middle of the second century? Who, but men, some of whom at least, had been instructed in the recent revelation by Apostles themselves. St. John did not die till after the close of the first century, so that he was still alive when Justin was born, who, in express terms, calls himself "a disciple of the Apostles." When, then, this Martyr was converted to the Christian faith, there must have been many a Bishop, and many a Presbyter, still in the vigorous exercise of his official duties, who had seen the venerable Apostle, and conversed with him concerning the newly established kingdom of God.

² First Apol. of Justin Martyr, Standard Works, vol. iv, p. 189, § 86.

The stream of Apostolic teaching was in the days of Justin and his associates, still flowing pure and unchanged, and from its waters both he and they were habitually drinking, and from their daily draughts were constantly deriving illumination and refreshment. The age of Justin was still a season of heavenly light, for though the Apostles, like so many suns, had all descended below the horizon, yet so recently had they departed, that the divine splendor they had received still shone brightly and strongly upon every Christian eye. Accordingly, *the testimony of Justin and of the whole Christian world which he represents, is worthy of our unlimited and fullest confidence.* Indeed, it seems to me, that as intelligent beings, who, by the very possession of the gift of our reason from the hand of God, are bound to follow evidence wherever it is found and wherever it may lead, we are under imperative and sacred obligation to submit, without reserve, our minds to the doctrinal teaching of Justin, not indeed in itself abstractly considered, but because it comes to us in the form of unquestionable and irrefutable testimony to matters of fact.

What, then, is the testimony of Justin and of the entire Christian body, in whose name and by whose authority he speaks, relating to the doctrines of the Gospel universally received in their days?

What does the Church universal in the middle of the second century testify concerning the sacrament of *Baptism*? Her testimony is to this effect:—

1. The baptized person is *illuminated*: “This washing is called illumination, etc.”¹ “We make common prayers for him who is now enlightened.” (§ 85.)

2. The baptized person *receives remission of sins*. “He is washed in the laver which is appointed for the forgiveness of sins.” (§ 86.) “That we may obtain in the water, remission of sins which we have before committed, the name of the Father, etc., is pronounced over him who is willing to be born again.” (§ 80.)

3. The person baptized is *born again, regenerated, created anew by Christ*. “The name of the Father, etc., is pronounced over him who is willing to be born again.” (§ 80.) “We lead them to a place where there is water, and there they are regenerated in the same manner as we also were.” (§ 79.) “He is washed in the laver which is appointed unto regeneration.” (§ 86.) “We will state in what manner we are created anew by Christ.” (§ 79.)

It is very important here to notice that the Church in the middle of the second century, in testifying that the person baptized was illuminated, forgiven, and born again, regenerated, created anew

¹ Justin Martyr's First Apology: § 80.

by Christ, also shows us what *interpretation* she had received from the Apostles, of certain passages of Scripture.

Justin, in § 79, refers the well-known words of our blessed Lord, in John 3 : 3, 5, "Except ye be born again, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," to water-baptism.

It is also beyond all question that the Church Catholic in the middle of the second century, understood *literally*, Mark 1 : 4, "The baptism of repentance for the remission of sins ;" Acts 2 : 38, "Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost ;" 22 : 16, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins ;" and Titus 3 : 5, "He saved us by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost ;" thus connecting remission of sins and regeneration with baptism, and fixing the meaning of the passages, and likewise establishing a very valuable principle of interpretation: THAT THE WORDS OF SCRIPTURE ARE TO BE TAKEN, WHEN THEY CAN BE, IN THEIR NATURAL AND OBVIOUS SIGNIFICATION.¹

Beginning with Augustine in the fifth century, and subsequently enlarged by Calvin and his followers, and within the present century applied by Dr. Thomas Scott to the interpretation of the whole Bible, a theological system has arisen which is diametrically opposed to the teaching of the universal Church in the period in which Justin flourished. This *modern* system, though it did not at first, has at length proceeded to disparage the sacraments; making baptism at least, little or nothing more than a mere ceremony. *The two opposing systems cannot be reconciled.* IF ONE BE TRUE, THE OTHER IS FALSE. If Dr. Scott be right in detaching forgiveness and regeneration from baptism, then the early Church, the church which still enjoyed the reflected light of the Apostles' personal instructions, was in most grievous error. COULD IT HAVE POSSIBLY BEEN ? You well know what my answer to this question would be. I have answered already, and have taken my position with the primitive Church. I trust and pray, my very dear sir, that you will ever stand there with me. I can readily understand, and I think in some good measure appreciate, the difficulty you encounter in admitting this reproached and ridiculed verity, for I have myself felt in my own case this difficulty most sensibly ; and it was not till I ceased to take the *opinions* of commentators and divines, and yielded my mind to the infallible

¹ "I hold it for a most infallible rule in expositions of Scripture, that where a literal construction will stand, the farthest from the letter is commonly the worst." — *Hooker, Eccl. Polity, B. V. c. 59, §2.*

guidance of the *testimony* of the first and purest ages, that I was emancipated from the opposite system, and found peace and comfort in adopting the faith of the Catholic Church. You have been trained in a school, which unfortunately more lightly esteems than we do, antiquity, the Church, the sacraments, and the ministry; and it is hard indeed to unlearn the teaching of so many years; but, my dear sir, does not the deference, which you and every other person are bound to pay to primitive testimony, (testimony, by the way, by which alone we can ascertain what are truly the revealed Scriptures,) as well as regard for the truth of God, the *whole* truth, and not such portions as we may prefer, require you to place yourself in this better and more profitable school, the school of early saints and confessors, of martyrs and Apostles, and of our Lord himself? ALL THINGS SHOULD BE SACRIFICED TO TRUTH. That God in his mercy may give you and me, and all whom we love, grace ever to make this bounden sacrifice, and that we all may find in the bosom and communion of the Church, which is the sure keeper and unerring witness of the truth as it is in Jesus, peace in believing and joy in the Holy Ghost, and thus be fitted for the glories of the Church triumphant, I shall not cease to pray.

Yours, very truly and affectionately.

LETTER III.

STATEMENTS OF THE WESTMINSTER DIVINES.

——— *Rectory, February 5, 185—.*

MY DEAR SIR:—

Accept my thanks for your prompt reply to my communications of last week, as your letter furnishes evidence that the important subject you have introduced to my notice continues to occupy your serious attention. Truth is elicited by examination and discussion, and I cannot but believe that we shall so far be agreed in doctrinal faith as ever to walk together most harmoniously.

I am glad to read in your letter these words: "I receive the doctrine of baptism as it is stated in the Westminster Catechism," as we now stand upon some common ground, so that when we ascertain what this is, we can, I trust, easily adjust and remove the other differences. As you have referred me to the Westminster Catechism, I open its pages, and there read as follows: "Question

161. How do the sacraments become effectual means of salvation?" According then, to this catechism, "the doctrine of which you receive," the sacraments are *effectual* means of salvation. The answer to the 164th question, declares *Baptism* to be one of the sacraments. Then, according to the teaching of the Westminster Catechism, *Baptism is an effectual means of salvation*, and this "doctrine you receive."

In answer 177, we are told that "baptism is a sign and seal of regeneration and ingrafting into Christ, and that, *even to infants*."

In the Shorter Catechism, answer 92 affirms that "in a sacrament, Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant are represented, sealed, and *applied* to believers," while answer 95 teaches, that the infants of such as are members of the Church are to be baptized.

Here, then, is "the doctrine of baptism which *you receive*:"
BAPTISM IS AN EFFECTUAL MEANS OF SALVATION TO BELIEVERS AND THEIR CHILDREN; IN BAPTISM, TO BOTH ARE APPLIED CHRIST AND THE BENEFITS OF THE NEW COVENANT.

If this is not the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, I am utterly unable to understand and interpret language. As you "receive this doctrine of baptism," so do I most fully, with the exception that I cannot limit baptism and its benefits to the children of believers. We may surely congratulate ourselves that we are of one mind on these important points:—Baptism is a means of salvation to believers and their children, and applies to both, Christ and the benefits of the new covenant. With the exception just mentioned, this is all I ask, this is all I contend for, as it meets the language of our Baptismal Service, and the language of the Scriptures on this subject; and I may add, that with the limitation already stated, the words of the Westminster Catechisms will satisfy every Protestant Episcopal clergyman in Christendom. All that we maintain, and for the maintaining of which we have heaped upon us such constant and unmeasured abuse and obloquy, is, that baptism when rightly received, is not a mere sign, but a means of salvation,¹ and an effectual means, and that it applies, not only to believers and their children, but to all children, (since our Saviour does not allow us to "forbid" any from coming to him,) Christ and the benefits of the new covenant; benefits which are, according to the Westminster Catechism itself (A. 165), "ingrafting into Christ, remission of sins

¹ "A sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, *as a means whereby we receive the same*." — Catechism of Prot. Epis. Church.

"Sacraments ordained of Christ are certain sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace, *by the which God doth work invisibly in us*." — XXV. Article of Religion.

by his blood, regeneration by his Spirit, adoption, and resurrection unto everlasting life." Between yourself then, and the Protestant Episcopal Church, there is, according to your own profession, but this single difference: the extent to which Infant Baptism shall be administered. You would restrict its application to the children of believers; the Church would, in obedience to the command of her Sovereign Head, bring, if possible, all into the arms of his mercy. I trust you will not condemn the Church for being like her compassionate Lord, thus charitable, and for being thus dutiful to him.

After your declaration, "I receive the doctrine of Baptism as it is stated in the Westminster Catechism," by the adoption of which, as your confession of faith, you yield almost every ground of controversy between us, save that concerning the limitation of Infant Baptism, it seems nearly superfluous to reply to what you say in the remaining portions of your letter: but as you misunderstand me in some instances; do injustice to Justin Martyr as a witness, the only character in which I introduced him; interpret important texts of Scripture in a way that sound criticism does not warrant; and raise objections to the baptismal system which deserve to be answered, I shall feel obliged to trouble you perhaps once and again.

Yours, very truly and affectionately.

LETTER IV.

JUSTIN MARTYR A COMPETENT WITNESS.

——— *Rectory, February 6, 185—.*

MY DEAR SIR:

The next thing in your communication which it is necessary for me to consider, is your attempt *to destroy the character of Justin Martyr as a witness*. After occupying a sheet in examining his Apology and the opinions he has there expressed, you pronounce this sentence upon him: "His testimony would have the least possible weight in any human tribunal." To this very remarkable conclusion you bring yourself by a two-fold process; by disparaging his competency as a witness, and by confounding his opinions with his testimony.

You endeavor to disparage *his competency as a witness*; and to this end, you thus remark: "In the time of Justin Martyr, Christianity was spread over all the East, and Spain, France, Germany and England. A very wide extent to be canvassed in order to

ascertain what was the universal, or even the general state of opinion, or of fact. The means, too, of communication, were few and tardy ; no posts, no newspapers, no regular system of carriage ; no periodical conventions, anniversaries, or other means of the centralization of knowledge, even at Rome itself. Justin Martyr, moreover, was never even there, that we hear of ; but lived and died in a remote province, a conquered and down-trodden and partially depopulated corner of the Empire ; and not even in the capital city of that province. What, I ask, were his means of knowing what was *universally* held, or *generally* believed, among all the Christians of the world ? Verily, the testimony of a witness so circumstanced, on such a question, would be deemed of very little worth, even in our county courts."

To these assertions of yours permit me to reply. With regard to the "spread of Christianity *over all* the East, and Spain, France, Germany, and England," at so early a period as little more than a century after the death of our Lord, the period when Justin flourished, there is some reason to doubt. Mosheim, describing the extent to which the Gospel had been disseminated at the *end* of the second century, and referring for his authority to Irenæus and Tertullian, who both lived some fifty years later than Justin, expresses himself much more moderately. "In *nearly* all the East, and *among* the Germans, the Spaniards, the Celts, the Britons, and other nations, Christ was now worshipped as God."¹

The commonly received opinion is, as you may see by consulting Mosheim in the subsequent sections of this same chapter, that Christianity was not introduced into France till about A. D. 150, and *from thence* extended into the portions of Germany bordering upon the South-West bank of the Rhine, and also into Britain ; though the Gospel was most probably in this island at an earlier date. Christianity, then, in the time of Justin, instead of being "spread *over all* Spain, France, Germany, and England," scarcely existed at all in these countries, and only in a very few places ; while even in the East, its extension was not absolutely universal. "The very *wide* extent to be canvassed" by Justin "in order to ascertain what was the universal, or even the general state of opinion, or of fact," is not, after all, so "*very wide*," as you represent. How could "Christianity have been spread over all the East, and Spain, France, Germany, and England," when "the means of communication were few and tardy," and when there were "no posts, no newspapers, no printing, no regular system of carriage," and when, we may add, the Gospel everywhere encountered the sternest

¹ B. I. Cent. II., Part 1, c. 1, § 3.

opposition from the pagan and barbarous people? We may rest assured, therefore, that Justin Martyr was not obliged to canvass the wide extent of the Transalpine portions of the Roman Empire in order to ascertain what was then the universal, or even the general state of opinion or of fact; for possibly there were there no Christian opinions to be canvassed, and no facts respecting Christians to be ascertained.

What were Justin Martyr's opportunities of becoming acquainted with the views and practices of Christians in the *Central and Eastern* districts of the Empire of the Cesars? You say, "Justin Martyr was *never* in Rome; but *lived and died* in a remote province, a conquered and down-trodden and partially depopulated *corner* of the Empire; and not even in the capital city of that province."

This "remote corner of the Empire" was no other than Palestine itself; not so "remote" from Rome, but that her dominion extended many hundred miles still further East; nor exactly a "corner," either, when we recollect the wonderful events which had so recently transpired in this land of marvels; the miraculous establishment of Christianity, and the subjugating wars waged against the Jews by the Roman Emperors, Vespasian and Titus. The Holy Land was no "corner" in St. Paul's days; for in his address before king Agrippa, he expressly affirms, "This thing;" the divine introduction of the Gospel into the world, "was not done in a *corner*;" nor has this land been "a corner" in *any* subsequent period.

Nor was the birth-place of Justin (Flavia Neapolis, the Sychar of the New Testament), any mean city, but large and flourishing, very early the seat of a Christian Church, and soon after, the residence of a Christian Bishop; proofs of which you may see in Robinson's *Biblical Researches in Palestine*. If, then, Justin Martyr had lived and died in Neapolis, as you assert he did, his means of understanding the truths of the Gospel would not have been small.

But *did he live and die* in his native city? So far from this, that we are told in his biography¹ "he gratified his ardor for the acquisition of knowledge *by travel*; visited Alexandria; about the beginning of the reign of Antoninus Pius *fixed his abode in Rome*, where, about A. D. 165, he was beheaded for refusing to worship the gods of the Romans, and for avowing his faith in the doctrines of Christianity."

Eusebius, in his *Ecclesiastical History*,² likewise states that

¹ Standard Works, IV. pp. 44-51.

² B. 4, c. 11, 12, 16, 17, 18.

Justin, though a native of the new city of Palestine, "had his residence at Rome, where he also suffered martyrdom."

Instead, then, of "living and dying in Palestine," Justin Martyr had visited Egypt and Italy, and passed several years in the imperial city itself. Surely a man who had travelled in Asia, in Africa, and in Europe, must have known not a little of the religion of which he was an open professor and a public defender, and been fully competent to give his testimony concerning the doctrines and usages of his fellow-Christians. Previously to addressing his First Apology to the Roman Emperors, the treatise in which is his description of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, he had in a published book defended the Christian faith against heresies; so that in order adequately to appreciate the character of Justin as a most trustworthy witness, we must bear in mind that he was, in the age in which he lived, the acknowledged champion of revealed truth. He was no mere novice, no cloistered hermit, no ignorant dreamer, no unlettered rustic, who had never wandered beyond the place of his nativity, no obscure private man, without knowledge and without opportunities of acquiring adequate information; but a learned and observing Christian traveller, who had visited the most central and important parts of the Roman empire, had conversed with Christian Bishops and clergy and people of various countries, and had for many years witnessed their religious rites and worship, and in these habitually united, and for a long period had been at Rome the chosen and approved expositor of the faith universally received by the followers of the Lord. Such a man could not have been an incompetent witness, but in the *highest sense qualified* to furnish the testimony he has delivered. *If Justin Martyr was not a competent witness, there never has been one; and there is an end of all certainty, except the little each individual may gather from his own observation and experience.* Men in these days, finding their novel views conflicting with his established facts, may strive to disparage the character and weaken the evidence of this martyred saint; but he was not so treated by the early Church, nor will he be thus used by the present Church, when its members shall discover, that in assailing the testimony of Justin, they assault the very basis of our Reformed Faith; nay, that they besiege the very foundations of Christianity itself. How differently was he once regarded! And happy will it be for the Church of Christ, when he shall again be esteemed and studied as he was esteemed and studied "in the old time before us." Only hear Eusebius speak of the man, whose very credibility is now sometimes called in question. "Justin was *the most noted* of those who flourished in those times, who in the guise of a philosopher, *preached the truth of God, and*

contended for the faith in his writings. So valuable and worthy of study were these works esteemed by the ancients, that Irenæus quotes him often. Justin “preaches the truth of God;” may the God whose truth he preaches, ever incline us to receive, obey, and defend this truth, whatever may be the sacrifices our fidelity may cost us.

Very truly and affectionately yours.

LETTER V.

OPINIONS OF JUSTIN NOT IDENTICAL WITH HIS TESTIMONY.

———— Rectory, February 8, 185—.

MY DEAR SIR:—

In relation to Justin Martyr, it remains for me to notice your attempt to disparage his competency as a witness *by confounding his opinions with his testimony.*

In doing this, you have in several instances attributed to him error, when, according to my apprehension, he was entirely innocent of the charge.

You say of his opinions in general, “Doubtless his doctrinal views were deeply colored with the philosophical notions in which he was steeped to the lips.” His entire Apology I have read most carefully in reference to this very accusation, and yet I am able to discover very little if any trace of the tinge which you assert his former philosophy imparted to his conceptions of revealed truth. On the contrary, as we learn from Eusebius, one of Justin’s books was written expressly for the purpose *of refuting the opinions of the Greek philosophers*; while Justin himself, in the twenty-seventh section of his First Apology, expressly rejects the Stoic philosophy.

But you refer to several expressions of his, in order to sustain the position you take against him.

1. Justin, you remark, “believed that Jesus Christ was to be worshipped only in the ‘*second place*’ and ‘*after* the eternal and unchangeable God;’ that he is only ‘the principal power AFTER God the Father.’” (§§ 16, 41.) But in all this, Justin does not affirm that the *nature* of the Son is in any way inferior to that of the Father, but all he asserts may be the simple fact, that in the New Testament the inspired writers, when speaking of the three persons of the Trinity, mention the Son in the “second place.” Thus our Saviour himself, in sending his Apostles to make disciples

of all nations, commanded them to baptize "in the name of the Father and of the Son," in this way "giving the second place" to the Son. After the same Scriptural model we say in the Catechism, "We believe *secondly* in God the Son;" while in the Te Deum, and everywhere else in our Liturgy, we worship the Son, in the "second place" or order, or "after" the Father, in reference to the succession of time in which we offer our worship. In this instance, then, there is in Justin's language neither Greek philosophy, nor heterodoxy, but simple conformity to the Scriptural form of presenting to us the three persons of the Godhead.

2. Justin, you say, "believed that the Son is 'the Word, or Reason, of which *all men are partakers.*'" (§ 61.) The word Reason was added by the translator in order to explain what he supposed was the meaning of the term Word; and therefore we may reject his explanation; and then the words of Justin will be parallel to those of St. John: "This is the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

3. Justin, you assert, "assimilates the Christian doctrine to the views held by the Greek philosophers." (§ 28.) What if he does *in the particulars which he mentions?* He merely states that the Platonists, Stoics, and the Greek and Roman poets and philosophers generally, held some opinions which are similar to certain truths believed by Christians. Is it not a fact? If so, where is the harm in Justin's saying so?

4. Justin, you affirm, "states that some of the prophecies of Christ were delivered *five thousand years* before his advent." (§ 39.) But may not the numbers here have been altered by the error of a transcriber? It is by means of this supposition alone, that we are able to reconcile many conflicting statements in the books of Kings and Chronicles, and shall we not deal as leniently with Justin as we do with the sacred writers? Then again, chronology had not been studied and settled in Justin's day, as it has since, so that if transcribers have committed no mistakes with his numerals, we may say, he being not an inspired man, employed the best means of chronological information within his reach.

5. Justin, you state, "applies to Christ, Gen. 49 : 11; and to show how the expression 'binding his colt to a *vine,*' was fulfilled, he informs us, that the ass's colt, which Jesus sent his disciples to bring to him, was actually *bound to a vine!*" (§§ 40, 41.)

The connection between the 10th and 11th verses of Gen. 49 is such, that the 'binding' *may*, to say the least, be as naturally referred to Shiloh as to Judah, so that on grammatical grounds, Justin may not be wrong in applying the latter verse as well as the former to Christ. This application of the verse Rosenmüller men-

tions as one, adopted by Christian interpreters, and even Henry approves of this explanation. So, in substance, Adam Clarke and Hale, quoted by him; also Scott allows that the passage may be referred to our Saviour, and likewise, A. Fuller. The assertion of Justin, that the ass's colt, for which our Lord sent his disciples, was bound to a vine, I presume neither yourself nor any other man can ever *disprove*.

6. Justin, you observe, "erroneously ascribes to Moses, what Moses never wrote." (§§ 43, 56.) The Martyr oftentimes, no doubt, quoted from memory; and as memory in him, as in all other men, was treacherous, he sometimes quoted amiss. But such a common infirmity of our humanity deserves not to be pronounced an "error."

7. Justin, you note, "interprets the 'government' in Isa. 9 : 6, which 'shall be upon his shoulder' to mean 'the power of the CROSS,' against which Christ *placed his shoulder* when he was crucified." (§§ 45, 72.)

That our Lord placed his shoulder against the Cross when he was crucified, is a fact which cannot be denied. But the word Cross has a twofold meaning; one literal, the other spiritual; the one indicating a wooden instrument of torture and death, the other, the meritorious sacrifice of the Son of God offered upon the literal Cross. By the power of the Cross, I understand Justin to refer to the sacrifice, and not to the wooden instrument; and if this is his reference, then has the Cross power indeed, for St. Paul declares, that by it, we are crucified unto the world, and the world unto us. Respecting the passage in Isa. 9 : 6, Justin says, "This is a prophecy of the power of the Cross," thus asserting that the government the predicted child would wield, would be by means of his powerful Cross. How does this differ from our Saviour's own words, "If I be *lifted up* from the earth, I will *draw* all men to me?"

8. You urge still another objection. "The passage, 'I have spread out my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people,' Isa. 65 : 2, which St. Paul, in Rom. 10 : 21, regards as a rebuke to the stubbornness of the Jews, Justin says was fulfilled when '*the hands of Jesus were stretched out*, at the time he was crucified by the Jews who spake against him.'" (§ 45.)

In the section to which you refer, Justin is quoting several prophecies; first he cites that in Isaiah 65 : 2; then Isaiah 58 : 2; and having made these citations from Isaiah, he thus proceeds: "In *other words* he" (Jesus) "saith by *another* prophet, 'They pierced my feet and my hands,'" etc. Having thus quoted Ps. 22 : 16, he then comments: "Now *David*" (not Isaiah) "the king and prophet *who said thus*, suffered none of these things; but the

hands of Jesus Christ were stretched out when he was crucified by the Jews, who spake against him, and said that he was not the Christ; for as the *prophet said*" (here referring to Isaiah as first cited) "they in derision, placed him upon a judgment-seat, and said, 'Judge over us;' thus 'gainsaying' and deriding him." It appears to me that taking Justin for his own interpreter, we cannot justly affirm that he applies Isaiah 65 : 2, to the *crucifixion* of our Lord, since he *contrasts* his sufferings with *David's* exemption from suffering, thus *excluding* Isaiah from his comments; and, moreover, refers Isaiah 65 : 2, to the proceedings in the hall of Pilate. But had he not expressly limited his comment to one whom he places in contrast with *David*, the connection of *thought*, which ought to determine the *real reference*, is plainly between the comment and the *Psalms*, and *not* as you suppose, between the comment and the prophet.

9. But you discover an additional fault. Justin "magnifies the *sign of the Cross*, observing 'how *impossible* it is that *anything* in the world should be *regulated*, or any mutual intercourse carried on, *without employing this figure*;' instancing the masts and yards of vessels, the plough and other implements of labor, and even the human figure, with its erect spine and outstretched arms!" (§ 72.)

I suppose the fact cannot be gainsayed, that nothing in the world can be regulated or carried on, unless straight lines are made to cross each other. Justin truly says, "The Cross is the greatest sign of his (Christ's) might and dominion;" for the Cross is a sign of his efficacious sacrifice, by which alone our sins are cancelled and our souls crucified from sin; and then the Martyr with great simplicity informs us that we can see crosses, or right lines crossing each other, in everything; but further he saith not, and therefore that he makes any superstitious or any dangerous application of these facts I cannot perceive.

10. Once more you object. "Justin says, 'that they who, under the sanction of human laws, *marry again*, are sinners.'" (§ 18.)

The Martyr quotes Matt. 5 : 28, "Whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her," etc., and also Matt. 5 : 32, "Whosoever marrieth a wife that is put away from another man, committeth adultery;" and then thus remarks, "Hence they who, under the sanction of human laws marry again, and they who look on a woman and lust after her, are sinners in the sight of our Master." Plainly his decision with regard to the sinfulness of second marriages is not a *general* one, but a decision *limited by the conditions he himself has mentioned: a second marriage when the wife had been put away by a former husband*.

11. "Justin," you add, "puts forth the legend about 'the

seventy' being shut up in different cells, by Ptolemy, to translate the Scriptures, as real verity." (§ 38 and note.)

I will transcribe Justin's words relating to Ptolemy's obtaining the Jewish Scriptures: "When Ptolemy, king of Egypt, was forming his library, he heard of prophecies in the Hebrew language, and sent to Herod" (Eleazer) "who then ruled over the Jews, desiring that the books of the prophecies might be sent to him; and the king sent them written in their aforesaid Hebrew language. But since what was thus written in them could not be understood by the Egyptians, he again sent, and desired him to send men to translate them into the Greek language. This being done, the books have remained with the Egyptians even to this day; and they are also with all the Jews in every place."

There is nothing here about "the seventy," nor "the cells," though in a work *ascribed* to Justin, there is. There is then some doubt, so I perceive in Murdock's *Mosheim*, whether Justin ever "put forth the legend about the cells and the seventy." But allowing that he did, he has in common with *all* the Christians of his time, yielded to the temptation in their disputes with the Jews, of believing a very silly story. The reputed translation took place two centuries before the Christian era, and was therefore a transaction about which the early Christians could have no personal knowledge; but as Philo, *the Jew*, records the wonderful exploit, we may cease to marvel that the disciples of Christ, who were not infallible, were ignorant of translations, and also lived so near the age of miracles, should too readily believe his plausible account.

I have thus examined the *eleven* exceptions you make to the opinions of Justin, and having striven to canvass them with candor and impartiality, I ask, Do these opinions deserve to be pronounced as you pronounce them, "puerilities and errors?" It is not certain that he has misapplied a single passage of Scripture; while in all the cases where he is mistaken, he is misled, not by his judgment, or by his imagination, but by the sources of information which were the best any man of his time could command.

The opinions then of Justin are not as erroneous as you endeavor to make them; and consequently his competency as a witness, so far as this could be affected by the erroneousness of his opinions, remains uninjured.

But as I do not depend upon the opinions of Justin, why should I have gone into an examination of his views, to which you object? Simply, to show that upon *your own ground*, there is *very much less* reason for disparaging his testimony than you maintain. What if Justin was as fanciful and erroneous as you pronounce him to be, I might still inquire with Archbishop Wake, Is a man *out of his*

senses because he is out of his judgment? I appeal to Justin as a witness to certain facts, and having employed him as such, I have not necessarily anything to do either with the falsity or the correctness of his opinions. When he wrote his description of the manner in which the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper were administered in his days, he had been a Christian for at least *five and twenty years*; and as he had eyes he must have known what he saw, and as he had ears he must have also known what he heard, whenever a person was baptized, and whenever the holy Communion was celebrated. For this knowledge, which he obtained from the evidence of his senses, I inquire; caring not, in this connection of the argument, what his own views were concerning the two Sacraments. This knowledge of his, derived from the testimony of his sight and hearing, I wish to consider a little more fully. But as this investigation would extend my present communication to an undue length, I must here conclude, by assuring you that I am as ever,

Yours, very truly and affectionately.

LETTER VI.

VALUE OF JUSTIN MARTYR'S TESTIMONY.

———— Rectory, February 14, 185—.

MY DEAR SIR:—

Having endeavored to remove your objections to the testimony of Justin on the ground of the erroneousness of his opinions, by showing that the exceptions you make to his statements are untenable, I wish now to say a few words on his character as a witness.

In his account of the Sacrament of Baptism, we may in the first instance consider Justin as delivering such testimony as he had acquired merely from *the evidence of his senses*.

In the course of *the quarter of a century* he had been a Christian when he wrote his First Apology, he must have very often witnessed the administration of Baptism; and consequently must have *heard* what was then said by the officiating minister; since from other sources we learn that whenever this Sacrament was administered, certain expressions were invariably employed, besides the formula expressly appointed by our Saviour; questions were asked, and answers returned; prayers no doubt were offered; and perhaps an address was delivered by the baptizing clergyman. The language used on baptismal occasions, must have described the *nature*

of the Sacrament, *the benefits* conferred, as well as the obligations assumed. Baptism, moreover, must have been a subject of ministerial comment and instruction at other seasons, so that an intelligent man could not have associated with Christians for the long period of twenty-five years, and not know from the oft-repeated evidence of his *hearing* what was the universal teaching on so common a topic. We do not here ask what were Justin's own views in this matter, but we simply listen to the report he brings us, that wherever he went, and this for more than a score of years, he heard but one language respecting Baptism; that it was everywhere called an "enlightening," and that in all cases "remission of sins, regeneration, and creation anew in Christ," were connected with the administration of this Sacrament.

Such is the first aspect in which Justin presents himself as a witness, reporting not his own *opinions*, but *the testimony of his senses*; and a witness both honest and competent; for he sealed his sincerity with his blood, and establishes his competency by the facts, that now fifty years old he had been a Christian since his twenty-third year, had travelled extensively, was a learned and observing man, and had spent a large portion of this period in the city of Rome itself, the seat of an Apostolic and flourishing Church, where he had been mostly engaged in openly defending Christianity against the assaults and perversions of its enemies.

But his character as a witness now assumes a much more elevated position; for he addresses us not as a private individual, though most worthy in this respect of our entire confidence, but as *the chosen representative of the whole Christian body of the period in which he wrote*. He speaks not in his own name, but in *theirs*, and the bare fact that they permitted him thus to speak, shows that they approved his statements. To quote the adage you cited in another connection, *Qui tacet, cum loqui debet, consentire videtur*: He that is silent, when he ought to speak, seems to consent. The Christian world of Justin's age were silent when they ought to have spoken, in case he testified falsely; they did not contradict his assertions, and therefore they *consent* to the correctness of these assertions, and consequently *his testimony becomes theirs*. As a body of testimony, Justin's book is *the testimony of the Church universal in the middle of the second century*.

Yet you say, "His testimony would have the least possible weight in any human tribunal."

But if the testimony of Justin is of "the least possible weight" on the subject of Baptism, it is of "the least possible weight" on all other subjects.

In the same passage where he describes the administration of

Baptism, he gives his testimony concerning several other important matters ; so that if his evidence is worthless in one instance, it is of course worthless in all. Upon several interesting and fundamental questions, the statements of Justin in connection with Baptism are generally supposed to throw valuable and decisive light. For example :

1. Justin says (§§ 87, 89), " We all of us assemble together *on Sunday*, because on the same day Jesus Christ our Saviour rose from the dead ;" and these words have ever been regarded as conclusively establishing the fact, that the early Christians considered the *first day* of the week, and not the *last*, as the Divinely appointed season of sacred rest. But you say, " The testimony of Justin would have the least possible weight in any human tribunal," and the *Seventh-Day Baptists* will thank you for your opinion.

2. Justin says, (§ 87) " On the day which is called Sunday, there is an assembly in one place of all who dwell either in towns or in the country ; and the *Memoirs of the Apostles, or the writings of the Prophets are read* ;" and this practice of the Church in Justin's time, all truly Catholic Christians consider as justifying the public reading of the Holy Scriptures on the Lord's Day. But you say, " The testimony of Justin would have the least possible weight in any human tribunal," and the *Quaker* who never reads the Bible in a public assembly, and the *Papist* who reads but *very meagre portions*, will each thank you for your opinion.

3. Justin says that in his day (§§ 85, 87) " the people expressed," at the close of the prayers, " their assent by saying *Amen* : " a response which the great majority of Christians, imitating this primitive custom, have ever uttered. But you say, " The testimony of Justin would have the least possible weight in any human tribunal," and *all congregations refusing to say Amen*, will thank you for your opinion.

4. Justin says (§§ 79, 85, 86, 87) that the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper were universally administered in his day, and this fact is one reason why the Christian Church has in all ages observed these Sacraments, perceiving from the fact that the first Christians did not spiritualize them into nonentity, as some persons have since done. But you say, " The testimony of Justin would have the least possible weight in any human tribunal," and the *Quaker* will again thank you for your opinion.

5. Justin says (§§ 85, 87), " The Deacons give *each one a portion of wine*," as well as of bread, and this primitive observance true Catholics urge in opposition to the perversion of the Lord's Supper by the councils of Constance and Trent, whereby the Romish laity are deprived of the cup in this holy Sacrament. But you say,

"The testimony of Justin would have the least possible weight in any human tribunal," and *the Romanist* will thank you for your opinion.

6. Justin calls (§ 85) the elements in the Holy Supper, even *after* they had "been blessed," "*bread and wine*;" and this fact, true Catholics maintain, proves that the figment of Transubstantiation, or the change of *the substance* of bread and wine, was utterly unknown *even in the Church of Rome herself*, at the middle of the second century. But you say, "The testimony of Justin would have the least possible weight in any human tribunal," and *the Romanist* will again thank you for your opinion.

7. Justin says (§ 86), "This food is called by us the Eucharist" (or Thanksgiving), and upon this fact, true Catholics insist when they assert that the Primitive Church never entertained the "blasphemous fable" of the Priest's offering in the Lord's Supper a propitiatory sacrifice. But you say, "The testimony of Justin would have the least possible weight in any human tribunal," and *the Romanist* will the third time thank you for your opinion.

8. Justin says (§ 86), "We receive not these elements as *common* bread or *common* drink, but the food which is blessed by the prayer of the word which came from Him is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh:" language which warrants the assertion of the Anglican Catholics in their XXVIII. Article, "To such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same, the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ; and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ:" an assertion the very opposite of the freezing negation, first broached by Socinus, but now, I fear, adopted not only by his followers, but by very many calling themselves Orthodox. "In the Lord's Supper we receive *nothing* from the ordinance itself save bread and wine. Those who believe that they partake of the Lord's body and blood in the Supper, *though only in a spiritual way*, hold an opinion *fallacious and erroneous*."¹ But you say, "The testimony of Justin would have the least possible weight in any human tribunal," and *the Rationalist* of whatever name will thank you for your opinion.

9. But if "the testimony of Justin would have the least possible weight in any human tribunal," precisely the same may be said, and with exactly as much justice, of the testimony of *every other* primitive witness; and thus by demolishing each early Father in succession, you demolish the entire testimony of the Church in the first ages of the Gospel. But when you have by this suicidal process relieved yourself of the Primitive Church, *how can you*

¹ F. Socinus, Works, I. p. 753. Racovian Catechism, Question 340.

prove that the Bible is the Word of God? Indeed, apart from the testimony of the early Church you cannot determine the Canon of the New Testament at all; so that when you say, "The testimony of Justin" (and by parity of reasoning, of every other early Father) "would have the least possible weight in any human tribunal," *the Deist* will, in company with the Quaker, the Romanist, and the Socinian, thank you for your opinion.

Above, I have called the disparagement of the testimony of the early Christians *a suicidal* process, and so most truly it is; for if we renounce the *early witnessing Church*, there is no refuge for us, but in bald Deism, or in the assumption, that the *present Church* is herself inspired; the very assumption of the Romanists themselves, and likewise their strong-hold, as well as their defence of their dogma of development; and also I am sorry to say, the assumption of not a few, who call themselves Protestants. The fact is, neither genuine Catholicity, which is identical with genuine Protestantism, nor Christianity herself can be sustained, defended, and made triumphant upon any other basis than this adamant rock: THE TESTIMONY FURNISHED BY THE CHURCH IN THE FIRST AGES OF HER EXISTENCE.

Yours, truly and affectionately.

LETTER VII.

THE CHURCH IN THE SECOND CENTURY UNCORRUPT.

——— Rectory, February 15, 185—.

MY DEAR SIR:—

But you say, "Either the Church in Justin's day was corrupted, or he did not know what its doctrines were."

Having already said so much in reference to Justin's competency to testify concerning the doctrines of the Church in his time, it would be quite superfluous to add anything more on that point; but as you propose another supposition, *the corruptness* of the early Church, I cannot refrain from subjoining a few remarks on that subject.

Well aware am I how eager some persons are to find corruptions in the Church of the first two or three centuries, and for this express purpose Mr. Isaac Taylor, of England, wrote his book entitled "Ancient Christianity." How does he make out his case?

By himself *corrupting* the words of the early writers!¹ The Homilies exhibit a very different teaching with regard to the condition of the primitive Church. For instance, in the Sermon against Peril of Idolatry, Part III, the Church of England and the Protestant Episcopal Church in these United States pronounces this judgment concerning the early Church: "*The Primitive Church is specially to be followed, AS MOST INCORRUPT AND PURE.*" How could the Church of the first centuries have been otherwise than pure and uncorrupt? Take the period when Justin flourished, what motive could the Church then have had to change her faith? She was not allied with the State, was not identified in any way with any School of Philosophy, or with any religious body whatever, for she was persecuted by the civil power, by the Jews, by every form of paganism, and by every sect of philosophers; in short, by the whole world. Corruption then could not have come into the Church *from without*. Could the deterioration have arisen from *within herself*? That there were heresies in the first ages we well know, for so we are assured by the early Church herself, who *invariably condemns these heretical doctrines*; thus showing how vigilant she was over the true faith, and how careful she was to preserve this faith intact and pure. On what ground does the Primitive Church condemn all false teaching? On the ground of *its novelty*, declaring that such teaching was utterly unknown to her present professors, to their Fathers, and to the Apostles. The Church in Justin's day must have still enjoyed the instructions of many a Bishop and other herald of the Cross, who had conversed personally with St. John, and could the Church have in their presence changed her faith, and they raised no word of remonstrance and condemnation? The early Church then could not from any influences within herself have corrupted the faith she had received; and consequently, *the fact that a doctrine existed, without censure and without reproof, is evidence that the truth is a portion of the doctrinal inheritance she derived from her inspired founders.*²

For my own part, therefore, I cannot perceive how either of the suppositions, the one, that Justin did not know what were the doctrines of the Church in his day; the other, that the Church herself

¹ See Prof. Whittingham's Letter to the Episcopal Recorder, Feb. 17, 1840.

² "Is it likely that such Churches and so many should have corrupted the faith precisely in the same way? No event where many individuals are concerned, turns out precisely the same in the case of all. There would have been some difference in their doctrine, had it been corrupted; that which is found the same among many, is not a corruption, but what was delivered to them." — *Tertullian, De Praescr.* c. 28.

was doctrinally corrupt, can possibly be maintained; and consequently, we shall, notwithstanding our prepossessions and prejudices against the doctrine, be compelled to admit that Baptismal Regeneration is a truth of the Gospel, a truth taught by Inspiration itself.

If the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration be a corruption of the Scriptural faith, it is the duty of those who make the assertion *to fix the time when the error was first introduced*. It is easy to find the period when the opposite dogma was propounded, and also who were its authors. *In the sixteenth century by the Socinians*, who define Sacraments to be mere “badges of a sacred covenant between God and man,” but in no respect channels or means of grace; a defective and frigid view most pointedly condemned by our Article XXV. Here was the *first* denial of Baptismal Regeneration; a denial which now, alas, is heard from the mouth of many an individual who considers himself as preëminently orthodox and evangelical!

We have already seen what is the teaching of the Westminster Divines on this subject; and their views were but the echo of all the Protestant Confessions (save the Racovian) *without exception*; the Church of England herself not exhibiting any statements concerning Baptism substantially different from those furnished by the standards of her Reformed brethren.

Thus stood the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration at the period of the Reformation; all the Reformed maintained it; none denied the doctrine save the little fragment of Socinians, who also denied the Lord who bought them.

From the sixteenth century upward to the very times of the Apostles, not a solitary voice, so far as I can discover, is lifted against the doctrine, but it is heard and taught everywhere, in Creeds, in Apologies, in Controversies, in Commentaries.

Hear Augustine in his controversy with Pelagius on “Original Sin.” “The hereditary disease in children is healed by his grace who makes them well by the laver of regeneration. Born in the flesh, subject to the sin and death of the first man, they are regenerated in Baptism to a connection with the righteousness and eternal life of the other man.”¹

Augustine is the Father, who, as you remind me, is styled by the Homilies, “*a Doctor of great authority* ;” authority which I shall not for slight reasons question. When, however, I discover the historical fact, that he is the author of the human dogma of predestination, I must dissent from his teaching in this particular at

¹ Augustine, De. Pec. Mer. I. 19, 16.

least, and adhere to the opposite doctrine of the earlier Fathers and the Scriptures themselves. His dogma of predestination, approved and refined by Calvin, and adopted by Dr. Scott and the Divines of his School, has produced an effect which Augustine did not foresee, the rejection of Baptismal Regeneration; for since, according to the Predestination-theory, some infants are non-elect, these of course are never regenerated, either in Baptism or at any other time, and consequently the grace of Regeneration does not universally accompany the baptism of children.

The way is now clear I believe for me to review the Scriptural authority for the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, but as this letter is already sufficiently long, I must defer this review until another communication.

Yours, truly and affectionately.

LETTER VIII.

THE WORD OF GOD TEACHES BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.

——— *Rectory, February 16, 185—.*

MY DEAR SIR:—

After so protracted a journey over the fields of antiquity, I have at length been permitted by an indulgent Providence to reach APOSTOLIC AND SCRIPTURAL GROUND; and as the Scriptures to which I shall refer you in proof of the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration are few in number, the encouraging prospect is, that I shall soon cease to trespass upon your patience.

DOES THE WORD OF GOD TEACH BAPTISMAL REGENERATION? This most important question I do not hesitate to answer in the affirmative, and in support of this assertion, I now appeal to the following declarations of the inspired volume.

1. "John did baptize in the wilderness and preach *the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.*" Mark 1: 4.

Upon this text you thus remark: "It speaks of the Baptism of *repentance*. John called on the people to repent, and confess their sins, and forsake them, and in *token* thereof to come to his *ceremonial Baptism.*"

You call John's Baptism "ceremonial;" but it was not a *mere* ceremony, for the Evangelist expressly declares, that it was "*for*

the remission of sins." Your comment on the passage *withholds* a portion of the truth St. Mark therein expresses ; inasmuch as he connects Baptism *as much* with forgiveness of sins, as he connects Baptism with repentance. This connection you strive to dissolve. By what authority ? What the Holy Spirit hath joined together, let no man put asunder.

On looking into the Westminster Catechism, "the doctrine of which on Baptism you receive," I find that Mark 1 : 4 is adduced to prove that "Baptism is a sign and seal of remission of sins" (Answer 165), thus showing that the Divines who composed the Catechism understood the passage as I contend it should be understood, according to its grammatical sense ; and according to this grammatical sense, it affirms that sins are forgiven in Baptism.

2. "And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them ; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.

But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, *Suffer little children to come unto me*, and forbid them not ; for of such is the kingdom of God.

Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.

And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and *blessed them.*" Mark 10 : 13-16.

On this passage you offer this comment : "It was only an instance, among others, in which our Saviour took occasion, from a passing occurrence, to inculcate an important lesson. When his disciples would have repelled those who brought little children to receive his blessing, he taught them, from the docility and implicit faith belonging to little children, with what sort of disposition they should receive the Gospel. It was *not* a Baptismal occasion, nor was Baptism alluded to."

I do not say that the occasion was a Baptismal one ; but as you admit that "the little children received our Saviour's blessing," you admit all for which I insist ; that his *conduct* on the occasion establishes certain fundamental principles in connection with Infant Baptism ; principles which I will now enumerate.

As the passage itself *does not limit* the littleness of the children who were *brought*, and whom our Saviour *took up in his arms*, we are not at liberty to limit it ; and therefore some of these little children might have been *infants* at their mothers' breasts.

The passage then establishes these facts : —

1. Infants are *moral* beings, because they were the recipients of our Saviour's *spiritual* blessing ; they are *capable* of regeneration.

2. The children brought to him were regenerated by him at the time, for his *blessing* on the *soul* necessarily includes Regeneration.

3. He communicated his blessing, and therefore his *grace*, to

their souls, *independent of his word*, for they could not understand his truth, and therefore his grace may be so communicated *at the present time*; a fact which overturns the untenable position, that the truth is the main, if not the sole, medium of our sanctification.¹

4. Since our Saviour when on earth regenerated infants, he can and will regenerate them *now*, inasmuch as he “ever liveth,” in his *institutions*, as well as in heaven, and has said, “Suffer little children to come unto me,” etc., and “Whatever ye ask in my name, ye shall receive.”

5. As our Lord admits ALL children, *without exception*, to his favor, there is with him no secret decree, non-electing and reprobating a portion of infants: for he has not two wills; the one receiving, and the other rejecting the same souls.

I observe that the Catechism (Answer 166) “the doctrine of which on Baptism you receive,” refers to Luke 18:16, which is parallel to Mark 10:13–16, to prove that this sacrament is to be administered to infants. In the Presbyterian Confession of Faith (c. 28), Mark 10:14–16 is adduced in proof of the *same point*.

3. “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, *for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*” Acts 2:38.

This passage you thus explain, “Here remission of sins is promised, upon *repentance and faith*, as it is elsewhere in Scripture; and the faith is to be proved by an act of obedience, namely, by coming to Baptism; and those who exercise this repentance and faith, shall receive the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. It was a case of *adult* Baptism, upon repentance and faith; and of such only as ‘gladly received the word.’”

Upon this exposition of yours, I would remark: It is *not certain* that none were baptized on the day of Pentecost, but adults; the contrary is, to say the least, highly probable. Saith St. Peter, “Be baptized every one of you, etc.; for the promise is to you and *your children*,” the promise of remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost. The promise is the reason the Apostle assigns why parents should be baptized; but the promise is as much to their children as to themselves: consequently there is the same reason why children are to be baptized as there is why adults are to receive Baptism; St. Peter himself being the judge. If you say with the

¹ “Among the manifold *exercises* of God’s people, dear Christians, there is NONE MORE NECESSARY for all estates, and at all times, than is *public Prayer*, and the *due use of Sacraments*. For in the first we beg at God’s hands all such things, as *otherwise we cannot obtain*; and in the other he *embraceth us*, and *offereth himself to be embraced of us.*” — *Homily on Common Prayer and Sacraments.*

Baptists, children here means posterity, I reply : The word children employed in this *unlimited sense*, necessarily includes infants ; and thus the passage furnishes what the opponents of Infant Baptism are so incessantly demanding : *Scriptural authority for baptizing little children.*

St. Peter here, as John Baptist had done previously, connects Baptism with remission of sins, and not only so, but also connects with Baptism the reception of the Holy Ghost. St. Peter does not tell his hearers to “prove their faith by an act of obedience, namely, by coming to Baptism ;” all this is an addition of yours ; and an addition, moreover, which seems to me to bring with it a false doctrine ; that obedience is essential to the remission of sins ; that we are justified not by faith only, but by faith and works conjointly. Why not understand the Apostle’s words according to their obvious and necessary meaning ? He says, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost.” Nothing surely can be plainer and more positive. You appear almost to admit the truth when you say, “Those who exercise this repentance and faith shall receive the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit.” Why reject from your paraphrase the clauses concerning Baptism and remission of sins ? Have we any right to suppress any portion of revealed truth ? Are *we* the judges to determine what truth is fundamental and what not — what truth is essential to the Gospel system, and what may be cast away ? We are *not* the judges, and we have *no* right to discard or conceal *any* portion, however small, of revealed truth. Why not then say, as the plain language of St. Peter requires you to say, “Those who exercise this repentance and faith” (and are with these qualifications baptized) “shall receive” (remission of sins and the regenerating and) “sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit ?” It is undeniable that the Church universal in Justin Martyr’s time so understood the words of St. Peter ; how can we be right if we understand them otherwise ? since both the grammatical signification and the received interpretation of the early Church fix the meaning for which I am contending.

4. “And now why tarriest thou ? arise, and *be baptized and wash away thy sins*, calling on the name of the Lord.” Acts 22 : 16.

Upon this exhortation of Ananias, you thus comment : “The case was that of Saul, already converted to the faith of Christ, and called upon to consecrate himself to his service by an open profession of faith, and an act of obedience to his command ; thereby entering into covenant with Christ, and thereupon receiving a full pardon of all past offences. There is no intimation, in the whole

transaction, that Saul was not regenerated *till* he was baptized, and then *by* baptism; but the contrary is, to my apprehension, most evident."

When you speak of Baptism as "an act of obedience whereby Saul entered into covenant with Christ, and thereupon received a full pardon of all past offences," the language sounds to my ear too much like a covenant of works, and as though obedience was in part the instrument of our justification. I often hear others use the same language respecting Baptism, speaking of it as an act of obedience, or as a token of obedience; but such expressions do not appear to me to be warranted by the Scriptures, and moreover they savor of false doctrine.

When, however, you say that Saul when baptized "received a *full* pardon of all past offences," you admit all that I wish, so far as remission of sins is connected with Baptism, though he was not, although previously the recipient of Divine grace, regenerated in the Scriptural sense, till he was baptized; inasmuch as he was not born of water, at least; our Saviour having himself connected water with the new birth (John 3: 5), and St. Paul calling Water-Baptism, "the laver of regeneration" (Tit. 3: 5), and therefore we are not to disregard this connection, and to use the term Regeneration but in strict accordance with the signification the Word of God assigns to it. I referred, however, to Acts 22: 16, not to prove that regeneration accompanies Baptism, but that forgiveness accompanies the administration of this sacrament; and as you allow this connection, I am happy to find our interpretations of this passage so far coincident.

5. "That he might *sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.*" Ephesians 5: 26.

These words I adduce to prove that Baptism has a sanctifying and cleansing effect. This, however, is the explanation you give of the passage. "It speaks only of cleansing the Church '*by the word,*' and plainly alludes to the washing of water as the *symbol* of cleansing."

The Greek word λουτρῶν, here translated "washing" occurs but in one other place in the New Testament (Titus 3: 5), and is the same word the Septuagint uses in The Song of Solomon 4: 2, "A flock which came up from the *washing*," and 6: 6, "A flock of sheep which go up from the *washing*;" where the word plainly means *washing-place*. The signification of the word in Eph. 5: 26, and Titus 3: 5, is thus beyond all question *determined*; and therefore by "washing" in these two places, we are to understand, not the *act*, but the *place* of washing: a pool, bath, or laver. Dr. Edward

Robinson in his Greek and English Lexicon of the New Testament says, that both in Eph. 5 : 26 and Titus 3 : 5, Baptism is spoken of; and he may well thus judge, since, as the latter passage refers to Baptism, the former as embracing precisely the same word ("washing" or laver), and also the term "water," must refer to Baptism also. Eph. 5 : 26 may therefore be thus translated, "Christ sanctifies and cleanses the Church by the laver of water (Baptism) by the word." The Apostle most evidently here describes *two* instrumentalities employed by our Saviour in sanctifying and cleansing his Church : the one, Water-Baptism ; the other, the word, whatever this may be. Both are *literal, actual* instruments, the one just as much as the other. Neither are *symbolical* ; for with the same propriety may we maintain that "the word" is a symbol, as that the washing of water is a symbol. If the New Testament is but a book of symbols, what cannot be made of it ! It can teach anything, and everything, and nothing definitely and positively ; and would therefore cease to be of any authority, or of any use, except as a toy for mystical critics to play with.

Yours, most truly and affectionately.

LETTER IX.

THE WORD OF GOD TEACHES BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.

———— Rectorry, February 22, 185—.

MY DEAR SIR :—

Bear with me while I finish the citation of passages of Holy Scripture which teach the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration.

6. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he *saved us, by the washing of regeneration*, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Titus 3 : 5.

With regard to these words you thus observe : "We are saved by *regeneration*, as *if it were* a washing, and by the renewing of the Holy Ghost. There is no allusion here to Baptism. The *washing* of regeneration is merely a figure of speech ; just as we say, the *besom* of destruction."

As you assert, that "there is no allusion made here to Baptism," I must first of all ascertain whether your assertion can be substantiated. *Many* other persons have supposed that St. Paul does in this place allude to Water-Baptism, and as the judgments of learned

and wise men are not to be despised unless for weighty reasons, I will mention a few of the authorities within my reach in favor of such an allusion.

1. Prof. Robinson, referred to in my last letter.

2. Prof. Hodge of Princeton in his *Way of Life*, published by the American Sunday School Union, and therefore approved by this Society; says, p. 226, "Baptism is called the washing of regeneration."

3. The Westminster Catechism, "the doctrine of which on Baptism you receive," quotes Titus 3 : 5, to prove that "Baptism is a sign and seal of regeneration by God's Spirit." (Answer 165.)

4. The Presbyterian Confession of Faith (c. 28. § 7) adduces Titus 3 : 5 as proof that "the sacrament of Baptism is but once to be administered to any person."

5. The Confession of Helvetia (Hall's Harmony, p. 303) says, "Baptism is the font of regeneration."

6. The Confession of Bohemia (Hall, p. 304) refers to Titus 3 : 5, to show that "God by Baptism doth wash away sin."

7. The Confession of Saxony (Hall, p. 310) employs this language: "That the Holy Ghost is given in Baptism, Paul affirmeth it in his epistle to Titus, saying, 'By the washing of the new birth, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.'"

8. The Confession of Sueveland (Hall, p. 315) says, "Baptism is the font of regeneration. Titus 3 : 5."

9. Calvin (Institutes b. 4, chaps. 15, 16) in *three* different places affirms that Titus 3 : 5 refers to Baptism.

10. Archbishop Cranmer, in the passage I quoted in my first letter, thus writes: "Paul calleth the water of Baptism the bath of regeneration."

11. The Homilies (Sermon for repairing and keeping clean of Churches) have this language: "In the house of God, the Font to christen in, the fountain of our regeneration is presented unto us."

12. The Protestant Episcopal Church in her Baptismal Offices, in her Confirmation Service, and in her Articles, LX and XXVII, undoubtedly considers Titus 3 : 5 as referring to Baptism.

13. Augustine, the "Doctor of great authority," beyond all question connects Titus 3 : 5 with Baptism when he says, "The hereditary disease in children is healed by his grace who makes them well *by the laver of regeneration*."

14. Gregory Nazianzen of the fourth century has, in Oration 40, concerning Baptism, these words, "We call it the laver of regeneration;" λουτρὸν παλιγγενεσίας, the very phrase of St. Paul in Titus 3 : 5.

15. Cyprian, A. D. 250, has these words, "That that is Bap-

tism in which the old man dies, and the new man is born, the blessed Apostle shows and proves, when he says, ‘ he has saved us by the washing of regeneration ; ’ ” *servavit nos per lavacrum* (washing-place) *regenerationis*.¹

16. Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch, A. D. 170, testifies to the same effect, “ Men receive remission of sins *by the laver of regeneration*.”²

17. Justin Martyr, A. D. 150, speaking of candidates for Baptism, says, “ They are brought by us to a place where there is water, and are regenerated by the same manner of regeneration by which we ourselves were regenerated ; for they are *washed with water* in the name of God the Father,” etc. ; Justin using *the very word* λουτρὸν, *lavacrum*, St. Paul uses in Tit. 3 : 5 and Eph. 5 : 26.³

What is the amount of these *seventeen* instances of assertion that Tit. 3 : 5 alludes to Baptism ? Just this : The Presbyterian Church both in the United States and Great Britain, the Churches of Helvetia, Bohemia, Saxony, Sueveland, Switzerland, the Protestant Episcopal Church, wherever found, the Church of ancient Africa, of Antioch, of Constantinople, and of Rome, *all maintain, that by the washing of regeneration in Tit. 3 : 5, Water-Baptism is intended*. The testimony of the ancient Churches to this effect is most valuable and conclusive, inasmuch as *the universally received interpretation of the passage at this early period must be the correct interpretation*. Whence came this interpretation ? As the whole *Primitive Church had it, from what source could it have descended but from the Apostles themselves, and therefore from an inspired and infallible original ?*

Having thus seen what has been the decision of the whole Christian world, *till within a very recent period*, I will consider the words of the passage itself.

We have already perceived that by “ washing,” a *washing-place* is intended ; the word *never* has any other meaning. Washing-place, pool, bath, laver must of necessity describe something which is material, literal, actual ; nothing immaterial, nothing spiritual. Not only does the word itself prove this, but also its connection with the *renewing* of the Holy Ghost. St. Paul affirms that God our Saviour saves us by *two* agencies ; the washing or laver of regeneration, *and* the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Is not the renewing real and actual ? If so, then must “ the washing ” be something actual and real likewise.

¹ Cypriani, Ep. 74, *ad Pompeium*.

² Theophil. *ad Autolyc*. I. ii. c. 16.

³ Justin, *Apol.* c. 61.

But what material washing was there of which *all* Christians were partakers? what *washing-place*, in which they all washed? for the language of the Apostle is here of universal application. No other real washing of which all believers in Christ partook save that of Water-Baptism in the names of the blessed Trinity. Nothing else then than Baptism can be intended by the washing, the washing-place, the laver of regeneration. — The nature of the word itself, its connection with the renewing of the Holy Ghost, and the obligation under which all the followers of the Lord are to be baptized, limit the application of the term to the Sacrament of our new birth.

But you say, “We are saved by *regeneration* as if it were a washing.” If so, then we are saved by the *Holy Ghost* as if it were a renewing. That is, our salvation by the Holy Ghost is only an apparent, not an actual renewing. We can apply this mode of explaining the clause, to other cases. “John did preach the baptism of repentance;” did preach *repentance* as if it were a baptism. Again, “Christ sanctifies and cleanses his Church with the washing of water;” he sanctifies and cleanses it with *water*, as if it were a washing; an explanation which will render Water-Baptism the means of the Church’s sanctification and cleansing, a truth you seem disposed to deny.

Once more you say, “‘The *washing* of regeneration’ is merely a figure of speech, just as we say, ‘the *besom* of destruction.’”

The prophet Isaiah does indeed (14 : 23) employ the word *besom* figuratively, in the sense of sweeping, utter; but the term is here of necessity a metaphor, as it *cannot* in this passage be taken in its literal signification: and yet even *besom* of destruction is not necessarily a figure of speech, for there is such a literal instrument as a destructive *besom*, as the spiders would testify; the expression becomes figurative only from its application; in cases where it *cannot* be understood literally. Far otherwise is it with the phrase, *washing-place* of regeneration in the relation in which it stands; it *can* be taken in its literal sense, and therefore *it must be*, as a phrase is *never* figurative except when it *cannot* be apprehended according to the natural meaning of the words. In three (Song of Solomon 4 : 2. 6 : 6 and Eph. 5 : 26) of the four places where alone in the whole Bible the word λουτρὸν, washing-place, bath, occurs, the term cannot by any ingenuity be wrested from its literal meaning, and therefore cannot in Tit. 3 : 5, be thus perverted, except by an arbitrary violence which sets the laws of language at defiance, as well as disregards the judgment of the Church universal. We are not to find figures in language when we can avoid them; for if our fancy is to be the mould where figures

of speech are to be cast, the Bible is at once rendered the most enigmatical, perplexing, and uncertain of all books.¹

With the testimony and judgment of the entire Christian world till within a very short period, and with the laws of language all in my favor, I must therefore abide by the conclusion that by the laver of regeneration St. Paul designates Baptism by the element of water, accompanied by the regenerating influences of the Holy Ghost.

7. "The like figure whereunto *even Baptism doth also now save us*, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 3 : 21.

On these words you remark, "Baptism is expressly called a *figure*. 'It is,' says Archbishop Sumner, on this passage, 'a *figure* of the cleansing of the heart from sin;' and he well observes, that had the heart of Saul been like the heart of Simon Magus, when *he* was baptized a few months before, 'Baptism would have washed away no sin.'"

Archbishop Sumner then believes, that in the case of Saul, "Baptism did wash away sin," but with Simon Magus it did not. To these observations, I have certainly no objection to urge. — When the Archbishop says that "Baptism is a *figure* of the cleansing of the heart from sin," I understand him to say that Baptism is a *sign* of spiritual cleansing, and not a *mere* figure, devoid of all efficacy. If Baptism be all figure, to be understood figuratively, then likewise is Noah's ark to be taken figuratively; for St. Peter says that Baptism is a figure "*like*" the ark; thus making *two* figures; the ark as much a figure as is Baptism; so that if the ark's being a figure does not destroy its reality, neither does Baptism's being a figure destroy its reality. If the Apostle does not describe Baptism as a literal transaction, then he does not describe the ark as an actual vessel. But he does describe both as realities, calling them figures for this reason: the ark was the type, and therefore a figure in this sense, while Baptism was the antitype (*ἀντίτυπος*), and therefore a figure in this sense; the ark figured Baptism; Baptism was figured by the ark, as our Baptismal Office so justly expresses it; so that after all *the figuring*, not a particle of reality is detracted from either; and the affirmation of St. Peter remains untouched: External Baptism by water doth now save, where there is the answer of a good conscience toward God;

¹ "There is nothing more dangerous than this licentious and deluding art, which changeth the meaning of words, as alchemy doth, or would do, the substance of metals, maketh of anything what it listeth, and bringeth in the end all truth to nothing." — *Hooker, Eccl. Pol. B. V. c. 59, § 2.*

where the answers to the interrogatories in Baptism can be made unto God conscientiously and sincerely, and where also there is faith in the resurrection of his only Son from the dead.

I have thus reviewed all the texts to which I referred you ; and now in looking back I cannot but think that they establish the positions for which I adduced them : *That the Word of God connects remission of sins and the regeneration and salvation of the soul with the sacrament of Baptism.*

The Church of England and her daughter in this country are not, then, in error, when they teach the unpopular and despised doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, SINCE IT WAS THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL TILL WITHIN A HUNDRED OR TWO YEARS, IS SET FORTH IN ALL THE PROTESTANT CONFESSIONS OF FAITH, as you can see in Hall's Harmony, AND IS THE DOCTRINE INCULCATED BY THE HOLY GHOST HIMSELF.

I am well aware how Socinus *glosses* some of these passages,¹ and also Dr. Thomas Scott;² but paraphrases and explanations are not the *veritable words* of the Holy Ghost, the *literal sense* of which, when it *can* be taken, and when it is sustained by the testimony of the Primitive Church, I am constrained to follow. Glosses and changes are the strong devices of the Socinians, Belsham warning his readers not to understand the Bible in its natural signification.³ If we can pervert and explain away one passage, we

¹ "Acts 2 : 38. The remission of sins is here attributed either to repentance without consideration of Baptism, or else to the public profession of faith made in Baptism ; or if anything must be attributed to Baptism itself, it must be nothing but a declaration of such remission." — *F. Socinus on Baptism*, c. 7.

² "Acts 22 : 16. Why should Saul hesitate to profess his faith by receiving Baptism, *the emblem of the washing away of sins.*" — *Dr. Thomas Scott*.

"Eph. 5 : 26. Christ had given up himself to the death upon the cross, that he might cleanse his people from their pollution, *by those influences of the Holy Spirit of which the baptismal water was the external sign.*" — *Id.*

"Titus 3 : 5. 'The washing of regeneration,' that new birth of the Spirit, *of which the laver of Baptism was the sacramental sign, but nothing more.*" — *Id.*

"1 Peter 3 : 21. Christ and his church are the true ark, *into which men enter by true faith ; this faith Jews and Gentiles professed, when by baptism they entered the Christian Church ; and thus the baptismal water formed as it were the sign of their safety.*" — *Id.*

The reader cannot but observe, that while with Faustus Socinus, Baptism is nothing but a ceremony, even with Dr. Scott, it is but a bare "emblem," or "sign," and not, as our Catechism declares, "a *means* whereby we receive an inward and spiritual grace, a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness."

³ "Impartial and sincere inquirers after truth must be particularly on

may another, till the glorious Word of God is by the negative process reduced to insipid Deism. Neither Socinus, nor Dr. Scott, can be my teacher, since they contradict not only the testimony of the early Church, but the obvious and necessary sense of the Scriptures themselves.

But you say, "These texts are much too slight a foundation for so important a superstructure." These are by no means all the passages I might have cited, but I referred to no more, because I wished to employ no superfluous material in this discussion. But suppose these were all the texts in the Bible which treat of Baptism. Would they not be a foundation sufficiently substantial for the superstructure I have reared upon them? How *many* texts are necessary to prove a doctrine? I suppose *one single* declaration from God, the Fountain of infallible truth, is quite enough. The *fewness* of the texts; this is the very objection the Socinian presents against the Deity of the Son of God! How many texts speak of the Sabbath as a day of sacred rest? especially in *the New Testament*? But I need not, as I might, multiply questions in reference to other subjects; for *as proof does not depend upon the number of witnesses, so the truth of a doctrine does not depend upon the number of texts which announce it.*

Yours, very truly and affectionately.

LETTER X.

COMMON OBJECTION TO THE DOCTRINE.

———— Rectory, February 23, 185—.

MY DEAR SIR:—

Next in order in your letter is an objection which you urge against Baptismal Regeneration. You say, "A very large majority of baptized infants begin to sin, outwardly and actually, as soon as they begin to act; exhibiting no evidence at all of regeneration; I conclude, therefore, that these did not receive any spiritual change in Baptism. I deny that any such change is ordinarily imparted in that ordinance."¹

their guard against what is called the *natural signification* of words and phrases." — *Calm Inquiry*, by Thomas Belsham, pp. 4, 5.

¹ "Whether God does always accompany the sign with the thing

For myself, I see not why this same objection might not be urged against all Divine influence whatever upon our hearts; urged to the exultation of infidels, and to the painful distress of the conscientious disciples of Christ, who so often doubt of their gracious state, on account of the many corruptions they discover in their souls. It might be said: A very large majority of communicants, even among Protestants (taking the Protestant world as a whole), sin outwardly and actually, exhibiting no evidence of regeneration; and therefore we are to conclude that these never received any change. Will you assert this of a very large majority of communicants among our different Protestant brethren? It appears to me that you must maintain this assertion concerning them, in order to consistently maintain it with regard to baptized infants.

But the assertion in both cases rests upon two untenable positions: *The one, that Divine grace in the soul is indefectible; the other, that the manifestation of this grace in the dispositions and conduct is not affected by human neglect and wickedness.*

The assertion that baptized children, who exhibit no evidence of regeneration, never received any spiritual change, *rests upon the position that Divine grace in the soul is indefectible.* But this position is contrary to our Standards, and to the Word of God. Our Article XVI. says: "After we have received the Holy Ghost" (observe, from the Title of this Article, "Of sin after Baptism," the article connects the reception of the Holy Ghost with Baptism), "we may *depart* from the grace given and fall into sin;" in the Litany we pray God to "raise up those who *fall*;" and in the Burial Service utter this petition, "O merciful Saviour, suffer us not *in our last hour to fall from thee*;" while St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews (6: 4-6) describes as *falling away* (for so is the original, the "If they shall," being added by the translators), certain persons, who had been enlightened and made partakers of the Holy Ghost; upon which passage, we have, in the First Part of the Homily of Repentance, the following authoritative comment: "In this place the holy Apostle speaks of the FINAL *falling away from Christ and his Gospel*, which is a sin against the Holy Ghost, that shall never be forgiven, because that they do UTTERLY *forsake the known truth*, do hate Christ and his word, do crucify and mock him (but to their UTTER *destruction*), and therefore *fall* into desperation, and cannot repent. And that this is the true meaning of the Holy Spirit of God, it appeareth by many other places of the

signified, *cannot be positively decided IN THE NEGATIVE.*" — Rev. Charles Simcox, Works II. 259.

Scriptures." The indefectibility of Divine grace is not then the doctrine, either of our Standards, or of the Holy Scriptures, and therefore the non-appearance of gracious affections in baptized children can never prove, that they were not regenerated in their Baptism. They may have then received the heavenly gift, and yet afterwards, through their own neglect and sinfulness, or through the carelessness and ungodliness of their parents, lost the precious treasure.

The assertion that baptized children, exhibiting no evidence of regeneration, never received any spiritual change, rests upon another untenable position: *The manifestation of Divine grace in the dispositions and conduct is not affected by human neglect and wickedness.* The objector to Baptismal Regeneration argues as though human agency were entirely unnecessary for the retention and increase of grace in the soul; overlooking, on the one hand, how effectually parental irreligion and the unrepented and unrestrained sins of childhood may quench the celestial spark; and on the other, the positive promises of God to all such as seek him early, as well as to all parents, who in faith and prayer instruct their children in his sacred truth, often reminding them of their Baptismal obligations, and bringing them up in his nurture and admonition. When we consider how few Christians, and how few ministers of the Gospel, even, adequately appreciate either the nature, the benefits, or the obligations of Baptism, as these are portrayed in the inspired volume, we may cease to wonder at the unproductiveness of this holy Sacrament as a means of grace; while under these circumstances to deny the fact of Baptismal Regeneration, on account of its want of greater fruit, is just as relevant, as to deny that a field has been sown, which in early summer shows only here and there a rising sprout and a sickly head, because after seed-time the ground was not fenced and guarded, but trodden down by the cattle, and plundered by domestic fowls and birds of the air.

Remove, then, the two positions on which rests the assertion, Baptized children, exhibiting no evidence of regeneration, never received any spiritual change, and the assertion falls to the ground; and with it the objection to the reality of Baptismal Regeneration, because we cannot subsequently discover in the baptized child any indications of a renewed nature. Grace may be lost; and therefore, though not now possessed, it may have been conferred in Baptism: its retention and growth God has made dependent upon human faithfulness, and accordingly, grace actually bestowed may perish from the want of protection and culture.

Yours, very truly and affectionately.

LETTER XI.

ALLEGED EVILS OF THE DOCTRINE.

———— Rectory, February 25, 185—.

MY DEAR SIR:—

It is my wish to notice in this communication what you allege concerning the dangerous tendencies and pernicious effects of the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration.

On these points you thus express yourself: “The doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration I think radically erroneous, leading to spiritual apathy and loss of the soul. My conscience is disturbed at the thought of countenancing such errors, and starving my own soul. The teaching of Rome is externalism, or a system of perfunctory observances. To this error very many of the Episcopal Church are fast verging, and the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration is one of the first steps.”

As the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration is the doctrine of the Bible, (“God saves us by the washing” [the Baptism] “of regeneration,”) as I have already proved, the doctrine cannot be an error, either partial or radical, but is an inspired and immutable truth. As such it can become the occasion of delusion, defective teaching, apathy, spiritual starvation, and loss of the soul, only by being united with human admixtures, or by being perverted and abused. If the doctrine be commingled with dross, or become the victim of perversion and abuse, *the doctrine itself is not in fault, but the individuals or the Churches are to be blamed that either obscure the truth, or change it into a lie.* The doctrine would receive a very delusive and pernicious addition, were it associated with either of the false dogmas of human invention, that Divine grace cannot be obliterated from the soul, or that its perpetuity and development do not depend upon the fidelity and diligence of its recipients; for in this case the baptized, both adults and children, would conclude that their salvation was inevitably secure, and would, of course, under the influence of such delusion, sink into spiritual apathy, and not only starve, but lose their souls.

But has the Protestant Episcopal Church made any such false and dangerous additions to the truth, that we are regenerated in Baptism? We must appeal directly to her Standards, now before the world for three centuries, and from these standards seek a decision; since by these are her principles and tendencies to be

determined, and not by the views of her members, whether ministers or people. What though not merely "very many," but all in her communion were not only "verging," but actually verged and gone to Rome, this universal defection would not change the character of our Church, as this is embodied in her Liturgy, Offices, and Articles, for she would still (fairest work of God below the skies), there remain, a radiant and glorious monument of Scriptural and Primitive truth, and a fearless and unaltered monitor to rebuke her unfaithful and disobedient children for their apostasy and danger.

Does then our noble mother teach us, that Baptismal grace is all the grace we need, and that Baptism will save us, believe and do what we may? Turn to her Baptismal and Confirmation Offices, and to her Catechism, and what do we perceive? We see that while according to the Church, Infant Baptism is the *seminal* act, it is by no means the only act the baptized child is to perform, or that is to be performed on his behalf, in order for him to reach the kingdom of glory. Is the grace of Baptism all the grace he requires? Why then is he so solemnly assured as he is, so soon as his mind is sufficiently opened to understand the subject, "My good child, know this, that thou art not able to do these things of thyself, and to walk in the commandments of God, and to serve him, *without his special grace*, which thou must learn *at all times* to call for by *diligent* prayer." But you say, "the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration leads to spiritual apathy." A soul in apathy, whilst it is *praying diligently and calling at all times for the special grace of God!* Impossible.

—No person, moreover, can sink into a state of spiritual apathy, so long as he has a sense of his Baptismal obligations, and is grateful to Christ for the benefits he received when he was baptized. But this feeling of obligation and this gratitude to the Lord are the very motives which the Church employs with every child who has been washed in the laver of regeneration. "In Baptism I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. My sponsors did then promise and vow three things in my name: first, that I should renounce the devil and all his works, the pomp and vanity of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh; secondly, that I should believe all the articles of the Christian faith; and thirdly, that I should keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of my life. Dost thou not *think* that thou art *bound* to believe and to do as they have promised for thee? *Yes, verily*, and by God's help, *so I will*; and *I heartily thank* our heavenly Father, that He hath called me to this state of salvation, through Jesus Christ our Saviour." Here

then we have an acknowledged, and moreover a professed *vow* of faith and obedience, and likewise a *thankful* heart for the blessings of salvation, and this vow and this gratitude both growing out of the fact that Baptism is the seminal act of our living unto God.

You are likewise found to say, that the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration “starves the soul.” We have just seen what vows Baptism imposes upon us, and what gratitude to Christ it inspires, as well as what incessant prayers it requires us to offer, and therefore in these vows and gratitude and prayers, the soul of the baptized is supplied with no small amount of nourishing aliment. But in order to save us from spiritual starvation, the Church furnishes still larger provision: provision both for our intellects and our affections.

Every baptized child is required to “learn all things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul’s health; he is to lead a godly and a Christian life; he is to follow the example of Christ; he is to die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness; he is continually to mortify all his evil and corrupt affections, and daily to proceed in all virtue and godliness of living.”

But I have by no means given even an imperfect outline of the entire Baptismal system of our Church; for Baptism, with all its instruction, discipline, and motives, is but introductory and preparatory to the other Sacrament of the Gospel, that of the body and blood of our Lord.

What qualifications does the Church demand of every one who presents himself at the holy table? “True repentance of former sins; a steadfast purpose to lead a new life; a lively faith in God’s mercy through Christ; a thankful remembrance of his death; and charity with all men:” and all these qualifications are to be made subjects of habitual self-examination. What does the Church assure the qualified communicant he will obtain in the sacred Supper? “Remission of sins, and all other benefits of our Lord’s passion; the spiritual food of his most precious body and blood,” and also spiritual union and fellowship with him. What incitements have we here for quickened earnestness and zeal in the salvation of our souls! and what ample provision for our growth in grace, and for our conformity to the image and perfection of our immaculate and Divine Saviour! If any soul starve in the midst of such plenty, the fault must be, not in the heavenly food, but in the depraved appetite and the diseased digestion.

No! my dear sir, a wiser and safer, a more Scriptural, spiritual, and edifying model of Christian character and training, and more influential motives to Christian activity and fervor, and larger provisions for the health and nourishment of our souls cannot be found

nor devised, than in the Baptismal system of our truly Evangelical and Apostolic Church; for the system embraces the doctrinal wisdom and practical piety of the entire sacred volume, and the result of the combined teaching and experience of the Church of Christ in the days of her earliest and purest existence. If used, as parents and baptized children are required to use the doctrine, Baptismal Regeneration cannot conduct to formalism and apathy, to moral leanness and death; but, through the blessing of the Almighty Author of this truth, to the happy opposites of all these: spirituality and renewed devotion, vigorous progress in knowledge and grace, and the perfection of the Divine life in the soul.

There remain one or two other points in your letter to be noticed, and to these I will give the earliest attention.

Yours, very truly and affectionately.

LETTER XII.

ALLEGED EVILS OF THE DOCTRINE.

——— *Rectory, February 27, 185—.*

MY DEAR SIR: —

In replying to your statements concerning the dangerous tendencies and pernicious effects of the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, I omitted, for want of space, one other remark of yours on this point. "Hence it is, that we hear so little of the natural corruption of our hearts, and of earnest calls to seek *conversion* by the Holy Spirit; but are so generally addressed as pretty good sort of Christians, though not quite as good as we should be. It is against this delusion that I earnestly protest."

When you penned this earnest protest, you could hardly have had in your recollection the language of our Article IX, where we are taught that "man is, by the fault and corruption of his nature, very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the Spirit; and *this infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated or baptized:*" or the often-repeated acknowledgment in our General Confession, "There is no health in us." It appears then that our Church, in making Baptismal Regeneration the basis of her doctrinal teaching, does not throw into the shade

“the natural corruption of our hearts,” but is perpetually declaring and confessing this important and undeniable truth ; and her fidelity in this respect to the pure Gospel, and this in the midst of abounding and increasing Pelagianism, is that which ought to endear the Church to you more and more, and lead you to devote all your energies and influence to her defence and extension.

You observe, moreover, that in consequence of the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration “we hear so little of calls to seek *conversion* by the Holy Spirit.” To this charge of deficiency, I know not but the Prayer Book will be obliged to plead guilty, provided we understand the accusation in the literal sense, for there are but few places out of the Bible where our Church employs the word conversion. The reason of this is doubtless the infrequency with which the term is employed in the New Testament, and then not as exclusively signifying the *first* step or act in the divine life. Conversion, in the Scriptural sense, is a turning from sin to holiness, so that according to the Word of God, an individual is converted whenever he forsakes his evil ways, and turns unto the Lord, whether for the first time or subsequently. With *this* idea of conversion the Prayer Book abounds, although it does not often make use of the precise term ; and accordingly we shall “hear” from the Church not merely a “little,” but a great deal, on the subject of conversion, in its true and Scriptural meaning. It seems quite needless to occupy time in proving a fact which will so frequently meet the eyes of any one who takes the trouble to turn over the pages of our Liturgy and Offices. Asks the Catechism, “What is required of persons to be baptized? *Repentance, whereby they forsake sin, and faith, whereby they steadfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that Sacrament.*” What subjects are thus furnished the preacher, wherewith to address the impenitent and unbelieving ! and if he neglect to use them, the blame rests upon *him*, and not upon his Church. After Baptism, Confirmation, and admission to the Holy Communion, the theme which is constantly pressed upon our minds and hearts is that of repentance and faith. This theme pervades all our services, from the Daily Prayers to the highest act of devotion in which we are allowed to engage. What is the General Confession but an act of repentance and turning unto the Lord ; and for what do we pray in the Absolution but repentance and God’s Holy Spirit ? while in the Lord’s Supper these same acts and prayers are repeated in a more impressive form ; not to overlook the earnest exhortations which we so often hear in connection with the Holy Supper to abandon every sin, and to devote ourselves wholly unto the Lord, which act of self-consecration we moreover, in

express words perform whenever we draw near the table of our crucified Redeemer.

I cannot therefore see how your charge against the Baptismal system of our Church can be justified. This system may indeed be perverted and abused by faithless and time-serving ministers, and by worldly and superficial people ; but what good thing cannot be diverted from its legitimate purpose ? and if the abuse of an excellence is argument against it, our Christian Sabbath will suffer sadly, and even our heaven-born faith must needs be abandoned, because not itself exempt from the lot of every blessing under the sun, corruption and perversion. No ; let us be thankful to God for the Scriptural and edifying standards and guides he has given us in our Book of Common Prayer, and also in reference to its unparalleled merits, obey the injunction of the Apostle, " HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD."

Having to such an extent trespassed upon your time and patience, I will for the present suspend this correspondence by a single remark, which seems to be fully justified by the historical facts we have been examining.

From the loud and startling notes of alarm and warning, which have now for so long a time sounded throughout the ranks of the opposers of Protestant Catholicity, and from the pious horror with which its adherents are so generally regarded, we might conclude, that he, whose name is " Liar " (John 8 : 44), had brought its principles from the bottomless pit, had with his angels assumed the forms of Archbishops and Bishops, of Presbyters and Deacons, and constituted the Church of England and her daughter in these United States for the express purpose of multiplying and scattering through the world the poisonous plants, and therewith blighting and destroying whatever is truly evangelical and holy. Surely, it must be some pressing danger that thus stirs so many tongues, moves so many pens, provides themes for so many pulpits, imparts activity to so many teeming presses, leads to the organization of so many associations for stopping the spread of the so-called awful and blasphemous doctrine, — that Divine grace is communicated in the Sacraments, — and furnishes employment for so many busy agents and toilsome solicitors and distributors. What is the mighty occasion of all this agitation and clamor ? of all this zeal and labor ? Simply, as we see from Primitive and Divine testimony, — *testimony which cannot be set aside*, — that the Anglican Church and her American descendant, hold and promulgate the Faith taught in Holy Scripture, and held and promulgated by the early Church at the time when the bones of the Apostles of our Lord had not yet mouldered in the dust, and when the very ministers

whom they themselves had ordained, had not yet gone down to their graves! Were the first martyrs now on earth, *where* would they find the Gospel for which they bled? and were our Saviour himself now to come from heaven, *in what Church* would he recognize in their integrity the doctrines which he delivered to his Twelve Chosen Witnesses and their associates?

May He, who is the Light of the world, and who is able to subdue all things unto himself, mercifully open all blind eyes! and graciously constrain all hearts to embrace and obey fully and exclusively his own unalterable and imperishable TRUTH!

Yours, very truly and affectionately.

ALMIGHTY and ever-living God, who hast vouchsafed to regenerate these thy servants by Water and the Holy Ghost, and hast given unto them forgiveness of all their sins; Strengthen them, we beseech thee, O Lord, with the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, and daily increase in them thy manifold gifts of grace; the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and ghostly strength, the spirit of knowledge and true godliness; and fill them, O Lord, with the spirit of thy holy fear, now and forever. AMEN.—*Supplication of the Bishop in Confirmation Office.*